CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Vieux Carré Commission

Guidelines Introduction

VCC DESIGN GUIDELINES

Historic preservation encompasses a broad range of activities. The Vieux Carré Commission (VCC or Commission) is empowered by the Louisiana Constitution with oversight of the protection of the Vieux Carré Historic District in a manner that is consistent with its architectural heritage, physical environment and the *tout ensemble*. Each generation of property owners is entrusted with the historical, cultural, architectural, archeological, social and economic traditions of its community. In relation to the built environment, historic preservation activities strive to enrich community integrity and cultural heritage to ensure that they are passed to future generations.

The *Vieux Carré Commission Design Guidelines* (*Guidelines*) are intended to be a guide for preserving and protecting the District's architectural and historical resources. The *Guidelines* provide information and guidance to be followed by property owners, design professionals, contractors, VCC Staff (also referred to as "Staff"), the VCC Architectural Committee (AC) and the Commission with regard to all exterior changes to properties within the Vieux Carré Historic District.

SECTION INDEX

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All applicants must obtain a Vieux Carré Commission (VCC) permit as well as all other necessary City permits prior to proceeding with any work. Reviewing and becoming familiar with these *Guidelines* during the early stages of a project can assist in moving a project quickly through the permit approval process, saving an applicant both time and money. Staff review of all details is required to ensure proposed work is appropriate to a specific property.

Guidelines addressing additional historic property topics are available at the VCC office and on its website at www.nola.gov/vcc. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires VCC review, or to obtain a property rating of significance or a permit application, contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420.

The first step in using these *Guidelines* is to understand a property's color rating. The rating corresponds to the historical and/or architectural significance and then determines what type of change will be permitted and the review process required for each property under the jurisdiction of the VCC.

Review boxes provided throughout the *Guidelines* indicate the lowest level of review required for the specified work. Staff can forward any application to the Architectural Committee (AC) and/or the Commission for further consideration.

HISTORIC DESIGNATION

New Orleans was the first city in the United States to pass an ordinance creating a historic district. In 1925, the Commission Council of New Orleans, responding to pressure from the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, established the first Vieux Carré Commission. This first commission faltered, however, because the agency was merely advisory in function.

In 1936, an amendment to the 1921 Louisiana Constitution (Article XIV, Section 22A) laid the groundwork for the creation of the current VCC. This amendment specifically addressed the preservation of the "quaint" traditional architecture in New Orleans' Vieux Carré, the so-called French Quarter, and enabled the creation of a municipal body to safeguard the structures within the area bounded by Iberville Street, Esplanade Avenue, North Rampart Street and the Mississippi River.

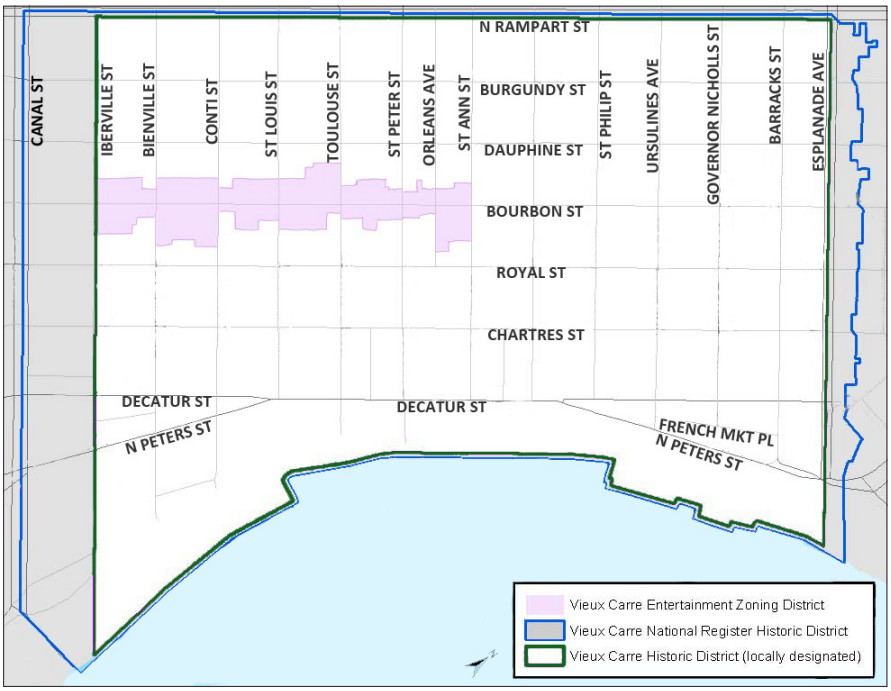
Through the efforts of a small group of determined activists, the Louisiana legislature passed Act 139 of 1936 to propose a constitutional amendment defining the VCC's composition, purpose and area of jurisdiction, and allowing the citizens of Louisiana to amend the Constitution of the State of Louisiana to provide for the creation of the VCC and authorize the City of New Orleans to create the VCC as a city agency. Following voter approval, under the State's grant of authority, the Commission Council of New Orleans passed the Vieux Carré regulatory ordinance in 1937. (No. 14,538, under Section 65-1-33 of the City Code. The authority of the VCC is further described in Articles I, II, III, IV & V in Chapter 166 of the 1995 Code of the City of New Orleans.)

The National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, is the United States' official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed worthy of preservation. Of the more than 85,000 places listed on the National Register, less than 3,000 are National Historic Landmarks, designated as having exceptional value or quality in illustrating and/or interpreting our national heritage. A National Register or National Historic Landmark District contains a major concentration of historic resources and may include non-contributing properties. Significant or contributing properties may also be individually listed.

The Vieux Carré was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1965. (The boundaries of the National Historic Landmark District and local Vieux Carré Historic District differ slightly.) Within the Vieux Carré are several exemplary properties individually designated as National Historic Landmarks as well of those of lesser historic importance.

National Register listing does not eliminate nor restrict the property rights of an individual owner, but it does require that agencies using federal funding consider the effect of proposed undertaking on the historic resource. National Register listing could make an owner eligible for tax credits for expenses incurred preserving a commercial property, and there may be other financial incentives available. National Register, National Historic Landmark and tax credit programs are administered by the state historic preservation office (SHPO), the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development – Division of Historic Preservation.



This map of the Vieux Carré identifies the boundaries of the local Historic District, the National Historic Landmark District, and the Vieux Carré Entertainment District located along Bourbon Street shaded in lavender. The VCC has jurisdiction over all properties within the boundaries of the local Vieux Carré Historic District.

DEFINITIONS

Historic Resource: An individual building, site, monument, structure or area that has been determined to have historical significance and its distinctive character conveys unique architectural and/or cultural heritage.

Historic District: An area that contains a major concentration of historic resources, listed on the national and/or local level, which can include legal protection.

BOURBON STREET: VIEUX CARRÉ ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

The Vieux Carré Entertainment (VCE) District includes all properties fronting Bourbon Street from the downriver side of Iberville Street to the upriver side of St. Ann Street. Properties within the VCE are subject to special signage and security camera provisions not permitted at other Vieux Carré properties.

The Vieux Carré is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. To protect its character, the VCC comments on issues that may compromise the integrity of the built environment.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION

The purpose of the Vieux Carré Commission is to promote the preservation of the buildings and structures deemed to have architectural and historical value for the benefit of the people of New Orleans, as well as Louisiana.

The jurisdiction of the VCC includes all private and semi-private properties within the boundaries of the constitutionally designated Vieux Carré Historic District, as defined by the Constitution of the State of Louisiana. The VCC's jurisdiction includes the erection, demolition, alteration of, or addition to any property within the District as related to the exterior of the building property including appearance, color, texture of materials and architectural design.

Before any work may begin on the exterior of a building or property in the Vieux Carré, first an application describing the work must be filed through the One Stop Shop and then, the approval of the VCC must be obtained. This process ensures the long-term physical preservation and maintenance of the Vieux Carré. Until the VCC has determined that proposed changes are in keeping with the character of the property, the surrounding parcels and the District, the VCC will not issue a permit for work.

The VCC maintains a Staff of preservation professionals who assist property owners and applicants through the review and permitting process. In addition to providing information, the Staff can conduct an informal review in advance of Architectural Committee (AC) and Commission meetings and can approve certain repairs, restoration projects and work that meet the criteria set forth in the *Guidelines*. The AC's jurisdiction is limited to the appropriateness of the design of proposed physical changes, based upon existing conditions and a property's color rating. (Refer to *Historic Property Rating/Review Process Levels*, page 01-5.) The Commission ratifies or provides a final decision on all applications and can comment on additional matters that affect the *tout ensemble*.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS LANDMARK COMMISSION

All historic districts and individually designated properties outside of the Vieux Carré are locally regulated by the Historic Districts Landmark Commission (HDLC).

TOUT ENSEMBLE

The concept of protecting the *tout ensemble* of the Vieux Carré was first addressed in the Louisiana Supreme Court opinion in *City of New Orleans v. Pergament*, 198 La. 852, 5 So. 2d 129 (1941):

> And there is nothing arbitrary or discriminating in forbidding the proprietor of a modern building, as well as the proprietor of one of the ancient landmarks, in the Vieux Carré to display an unusually large sign upon his premises. The purpose of the ordinance is not only to preserve the old buildings themselves, but to preserve the antiquity of the whole French and Spanish quarter, the ***tout ensemble***, so to speak, by defending this relic against iconoclasm or vandalism. Preventing or prohibiting eyesores in such a locality is within the police power and within the scope of this municipal ordinance. The preservation of the Vieux Carré as it was originally is a benefit to the inhabitants of New Orleans generally, not only for the sentimental value of this show place but for its commercial value as well, because it attracts tourists and conventions to the city, and is in fact a justification for the slogan, America's most interesting city. – *Pergament, supra*, at 5 So.2d at 131.

As defined in the Code of the City of New Orleans, Section 166-151:

> ***Tout ensemble*** means the historic character and ambience, characterized by quaint, historic or distinctive architectural styles; landscaped patios, courtyards, public alleys and squares; interesting and diverse retail shopping stores and shops; pleasing and proportionally scaled streetscapes; buildings attractive to and compatible with pedestrian activity; use and presence of indigenous building materials and flora; and diverse peoples, cultural attractions and facilities.

This legislative wording, general rather than categorical, takes into account that, within the Vieux Carré, there is a broad spectrum of historic styles, cultural influences, land use and density. From the original village settlement, the French Quarter has evolved into a microcosm of the city of New Orleans. It is comprised of the full diversity of its citizens, and serves as the focal point of the city's celebratory nature for residents and visitors alike. As such, the Vieux Carré has evolved with the city's population, providing a home for commercial activity, residents, musicians, artists, festivals and second lines.

In its regulation of the Vieux Carré, the VCC's jurisdiction is limited to proposed exterior changes to a property including the rooftop, interior of a courtyard, alleyway and/or carriageway. **However, to preserve the *tout ensemble*, the Commission has the responsibility to comment on, or raise concern regarding, any issue not specifically under its regulatory authority that has the potential to jeopardize the built environment.** Examples include comment on sidewalk materials, cellular telephone tower placement or the potential effects of vibrations from tour buses or trucks.

THE COMMISSION

As legally mandated, the Commission is composed of nine volunteer citizens of the City, serving four-year terms. Each is appointed by the Mayor, with the consent of City Council, chosen from nominations provided by the following:

- New Orleans Chapter of the American Institute of Architects – Three (from a list of six candidates)
- Louisiana Historical Society – One (from a list of two candidates)
- Louisiana State Museum Board – One (from a list of two candidates)
- Chamber of Commerce – One (from a list of two candidates)
- Appointed at-large – Three mayoral appointees

The Commission conducts monthly public meetings, during which its primary duties are to:

- Act on permit applications proposing the erection, alteration or restoration of any building, site, monument or structure
- Act on permit applications for the proposed demolition of any designated building, site, monument or structure
- Review applications for retention of work that was completed without, or is inconsistent with, a VCC approved permit
- Cite property owners for **Demolition by Neglect** of buildings or structures
- Review and lift **Stop Work Orders**
- Review and rate individual properties in terms of their architectural and/or historical significance
- Comment on issues regulated by other City agencies and departments such as sidewalks, street lighting, noise and tour buses (Refer to *Tout Ensemble*, page 01-3)

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE

The Architectural Committee (AC) is the recommending body charged with preserving, protecting and enhancing the Vieux Carré. The AC is composed of the three Commissioners representing the American Institute of Architects, volunteer architects from the community and may include other Commissioners. Members of the AC serve on a voluntary basis, attending bi-monthly public meetings. The primary role of the AC is to provide comment on design and the technical aspects of an application to:

- Preserve the character and quality of the Vieux Carré's heritage by maintaining the integrity of each property, its character and historic significance
- Protect and enhance public and private investment in the Vieux Carré
- Promote visual qualities in the environment that bring value to the Vieux Carré
- Foster the attractiveness of the Vieux Carré as a place to live, work and visit

At meetings, the AC reviews applications for compliance with these *Guidelines*. The AC makes recommendations primarily by assessing the historical and architectural appropriateness of the proposed physical changes.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

These *Guidelines* are intended as a tool to help manage change and protect the Vieux Carré's architectural and historical resources. It provides information, guidance and regulations to be followed by property owners, design professionals, contractors, the Staff, the AC, the Commission and the City of New Orleans with regard to properties in the Vieux Carré Historic District. They are intended as a supplement to, rather than as a substitute for, consultation with qualified architects, contractors, the Staff, the AC and the Commission.

The VCC recommends that an applicant review the information in all applicable *Guidelines* sections during the early stages of a project. Familiarity with this material may assist in moving a project forward promptly, saving both time and money.

AVAILABLE *GUIDELINES*

The following sections are available in these *Guidelines*:

01 Guidelines Introduction
02 Guidelines for Building Types & Architectural Styles
03 Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance
04 Guidelines for Roofing
05 Guidelines for Exterior Woodwork
06 Guidelines for Masonry & Stucco
07 Guidelines for Windows & Doors
08 Guidelines for Balconies, Galleries & Porches
09 Guidelines for Exterior Painting
10 Guidelines for Site Elements & Courtyards
11 Guidelines for Lighting & Security Cameras
12 Guidelines for Signage & Awnings
13 Guidelines for Storefronts
14 Guidelines for New Construction, Additions & Demolition

Each section addresses historic materials and building topics. All of the sections comprise the *Design Guidelines for the Vieux Carré Historic District.* All information is available at the VCC office and on the website at www.nola.gov/vcc.

These *Guidelines* cover the topics most typically addressed by the VCC. **Anything under the jurisdiction of the VCC that is not specifically covered in these *Guidelines* is also subject to review and approval by the VCC.**

HISTORIC PROPERTY RATING/REVIEW PROCESS LEVELS

Both the National Register and the VCC recognize that there are some properties that have greater historical and/or architectural significance than others. To distinguish the range of historical and/or architectural significance, every building and property (resource) within the Vieux Carré Historic District has been classified with a color rating. Based upon the color rating, alterations to a property will fall into one of three review process levels under these *Guidelines*:

1 **Level 1:** A resource that is of national or major architectural or historical importance *(a Purple or Blue rated property)*

2 **Level 2:** A resource that is an integral component of the District because it is of local architectural or historical importance or adds to the District's character *(a Green, Pink or Yellow rated property)*

3 **Level 3:** A resource that is an unrated 20th century construction or that has objectionable or no architectural or historic importance *(an Orange or Brown rated property)*

Contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 to learn the color rating of a specific building, structure or property.

PERMITS

If exterior work is proposed on any private or semi-public property within the bounds of the Vieux Carré, no matter how minor, the Louisiana Constitution and the City of New Orleans requires that a VCC approved permit be obtained prior to beginning work. The VCC has jurisdiction over all proposed exterior changes on property including rooftops and/or the interior of a courtyard, alleyway and/or carriageway. The general types of projects reviewed by the VCC include:

- Maintenance and repair of the exterior of a building, site, monument or structure, including painting
- Alteration of the exterior appearance of a building, site, monument or structure
- Alteration of a property including a wall, fence, walkway, driveway, garden structure and/or water feature
- Modification, addition or removal of a sign or awning
- Construction of any new building or addition
- Relocation or demolition of all, or part, of a building, site, monument or structure
- Installation of mounted equipment including an air conditioner compressor, generator, satellite dish, entertainment device, lighting or security device

The VCC reviews a proposed change to determine whether it is appropriate to the individual property and the surrounding historic context in terms of the architectural style, general design, arrangement, location and/or materials. Once the VCC determines that a proposed change is appropriate, it will issue a VCC permit approval. Otherwise, the Staff will advise the applicant on ways to bring the proposed work into compliance with the *Guidelines* and the additional review requirements necessary to obtain a permit.

WORKING WITHOUT A PERMIT

The VCC will inspect all work for compliance with an issued permit. If a new change is proposed after issuance of a permit, contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 for additional review requirements. Work undertaken without a permit or contrary to a permit is a violation of law and subject to fines, removal and/or restoration of the building, site, monument or structure to its appearance prior to the violation.

APPROVALS REQUIRED BEFORE STARTING WORK

VCC approval may be required for exterior work that does not require a building permit. This includes maintenance and repairs as well as the replacement of a roof, door or window, exterior painting and mechanical or chemical masonry cleaning. It should be noted that VCC approval is necessary, but not sufficient, for the granting of a building permit. Each project is subject to review for compliance with applicable zoning, building and safety codes by respective departments. The property owner is responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals prior to commencing any work.

STOP WORK ORDER

The VCC will issue a Stop Work Order for any work that is not in compliance with a VCC issued permit or that commenced without a VCC approved permit.

- **A Stop Work Order has the force of law**
- **Violation of a Stop Work Order constitutes a separate offense**

A **Stop Work Order** can be costly, both in time and money, as a property owner must go through the permit application process prior to restarting work. A **Stop Work Order** can only be lifted by the full Commission at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. (Refer to *Retention Applications,* page 01-10.) A property owner with an outstanding VCC violation may also be subject to permitting restrictions by other City departments and additional administrative adjudication.

WHEN IS A PERMIT NOT REQUIRED?

The VCC does not have jurisdiction over interior work, although a building permit and/or other permit may be required for interior work, and interior work may affect tax credits.

PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

The level of the architectural and historical significance of a building and the type of work being proposed will determine whether the work can be approved by the Staff or the AC, or whether the Commission's approval is required. As previously stated, the architectural and historical importance of a historic resource is communicated by the following rating symbols throughout these *Guidelines*:

1 **Level 1** – *Greatest Significance: Purple and Blue*

2 **Level 2** – *Significant: Green, Pink and Yellow*

3 **Level 3** – *Lesser Significance: Orange and Brown*

The first step in the process is to contact the VCC to confirm the property's color rating. With the rating information in-hand, an applicant should consult the applicable *Guidelines* sections for the type of work proposed. In a relatively simple application, such as a proposed roof replacement, consulting the *Guidelines for Roofing* might provide sufficient information to assure quick approval. In a more complex project, like the repair of a building façade, it might be necessary to reference several sections, such as the *Guidelines for Exterior Woodwork, Windows & Doors, Masonry & Stucco* and *Roofing.*

When reviewing the *Guidelines* sections, note that the most appropriate types of changes and/or materials are recommended and the level of review, based upon the rating of a property, is provided. An applicant is advised to select from the options that are most appropriate for the architectural and historical characteristics of their building and site.

Although the *Guidelines* sections attempt to be exhaustive in reviewing all possible types of work, these *Guidelines* do not limit the type of work or materials that an applicant may request to use on a historic building or site. A new or innovative solution may be explored and, if appropriate for a particular situation, approved by the Commission.

Following a review of all applicable sections of the *Guidelines* for a proposed project, a permit application can either be submitted online at the City of New Orleans One Stop Shop website at www.nola.gov/onestop, or in person to the One Stop Shop office on the 7th floor of City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street. The supplemental materials (exhibits) required will vary depending upon the type of work being proposed in the application. (Refer to individual *Guidelines* sections for supplemental submission requirements.)

The VCC must have all required information at the time an application is submitted for the application to be accepted for formal review. Samples, such as paint colors, may be brought to the VCC Office in the One Stop Shop after submission of the application. The VCC Staff is available to provide information and preliminary review of an application. The Staff can clarify the necessary exhibits and the review requirements. **An appointment with Staff is encouraged, but not required.**

PERMIT APPLICATION SUBMISSION

1. Contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 to determine the color rating of a specific building, structure or property
2. Consult all *Guidelines* sections that pertain to the proposed type of work, realizing it might be necessary to consult multiple sections – available at www.nola.gov/vcc and the VCC Office
3. Select design options and materials appropriate for the property's architectural and historical characteristics
4. Apply online at the City of New Orleans One Stop Shop website at www.nola.gov/onestop or in person at the One Stop Shop Office on the 7th floor of City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street
5. Submit samples to the VCC Staff for review

When submitting a permit application, an applicant should be aware of all applicable meeting dates, submission requirements and deadlines to minimize delays associated with postponement until a future meeting agenda. Meeting dates and deadlines can be found on the VCC website at www.nola.gov/vcc. Some applications may require multiple reviews. (Refer to *Intermediate Reviews*, page 01-8.) **The property owner is responsible for obtaining a permit for all aspects of a proposed project prior to commencing any work.**

VCC REVIEW PROCESS

Once the VCC Staff has received all required review materials, a determination will be made whether the permit application can be approved by Staff, the AC or the Commission. For the VCC to consider an application for review, the following information and exhibits must be submitted:

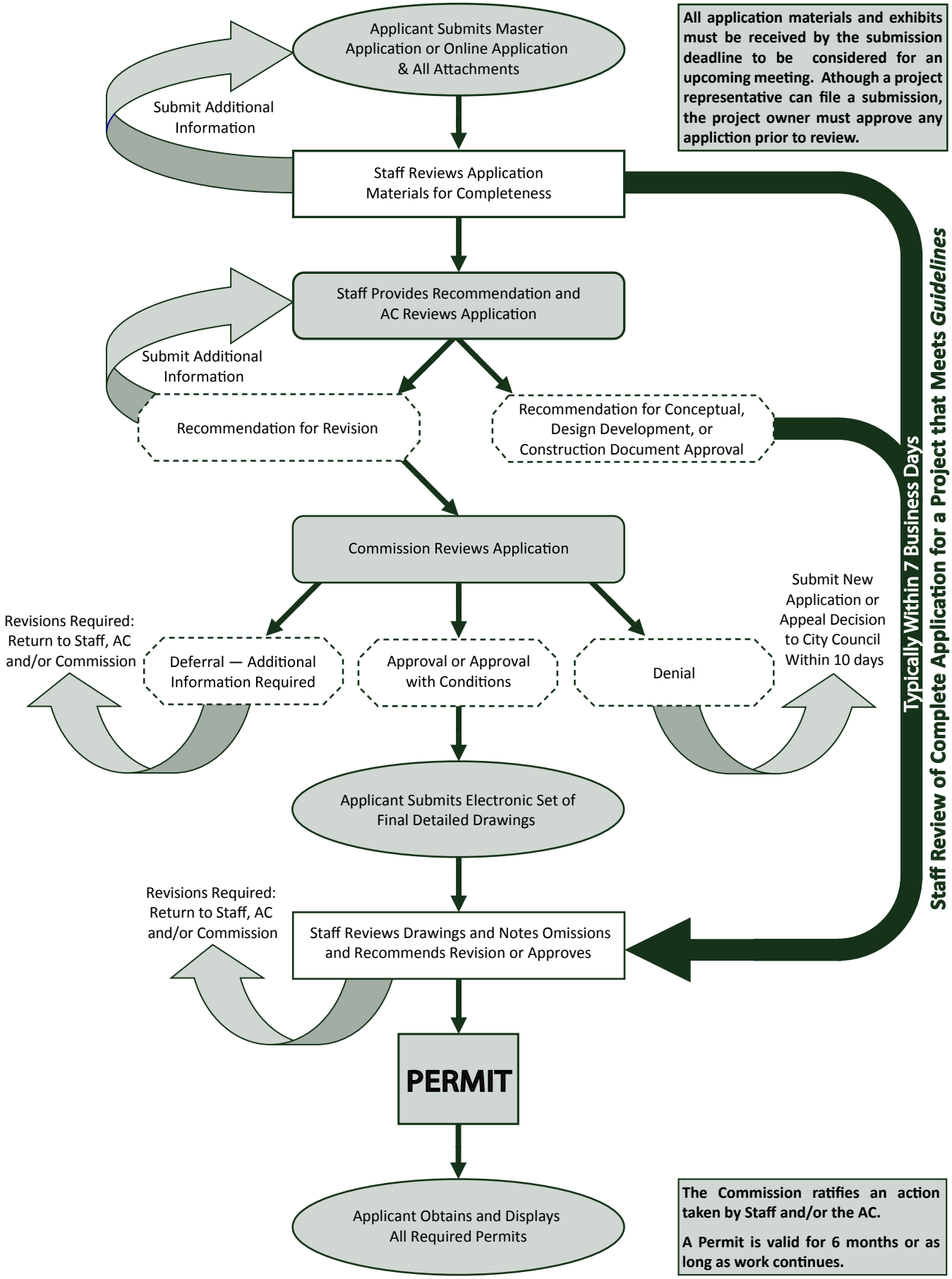
- A completed Online Application (electronic) or Master Application (paper)
- Detailed description of all proposed work
- Specific information regarding all exterior materials to be used in the work, such as architectural drawings and/or manufacturer's cut sheets and specifications
- The color of materials, including paint colors
- Required submission information (exhibits) identified in all applicable *Guidelines* sections
- Proof of approval of the proposed project by a façade or property easement holder, if applicable
- Any additional exhibits or information required for the proposed work that would be helpful in the VCC review, including photographs of the building, property and its surroundings

If all required information is not submitted, the application process will be delayed.

SUBMISSION CLARIFICATION

For questions related to submission requirements, the One Stop Shop can be reached at (504) 658-7100. The VCC can be contacted at (504) 658-1420 to schedule an appointment for a preliminary application review.

VCC APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS


Applicant Submits Master Application or Online Application & All Attachments
Submit Additional Information
Staff Reviews Application Materials for Completeness
Staff Provides Recommendation and AC Reviews Application
Submit Additional Information
Recommendation for Revision
Recommendation for Conceptual, Design Development, or Construction Document Approval
Commission Reviews Application
Revisions Required: Return to Staff, AC and/or Commission
Deferral — Additional Information Required
Approval or Approval with Conditions
Denial
Submit New Application or Appeal Decision to City Council Within 10 days
Applicant Submits Electronic Set of Final Detailed Drawings
Revisions Required: Return to Staff, AC and/or Commission
Staff Reviews Drawings and Notes Omissions and Recommends Revision or Approves
PERMIT
Applicant Obtains and Displays All Required Permits
Typically Within 7 Business Days
Staff Review of Complete Application for a Project that Meets Guidelines

All application materials and exhibits must be received by the submission deadline to be considered for an upcoming meeting. Athough a project representative can file a submission, the project owner must approve any appliction prior to review.

The Commission ratifies an action taken by Staff and/or the AC.

A Permit is valid for 6 months or as long as work continues.

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS & REVIEWS

The following is a general explanation of the level of review required for an application. Refer to specific *Guidelines* sections for the minimum level of review required.

Maintenance/In-kind Repair/Replacement

All exterior maintenance, including painting, as well as in-kind repair or replacement that matches existing details may be approved by the VCC Staff. The Staff will review the permit application and, if all the necessary information is submitted, will provide VCC permit approval.

Restoration

The Staff may approve exterior alterations that are considered to be a restoration, returning the building, structure or site to its original condition. The Staff may require photographic or archival documentation as proof of the original design to be submitted along with the permit application and measured drawings. The Staff will review the permit application and, if all the necessary information is submitted, will provide VCC permit approval.

Renovation

Changes to the exterior configuration of a building or parcel, such as the addition of a dormer or mechanical equipment, or an alteration to a window or door that is not considered restoration will require the review of the AC. Typically, an application must include elevations and floor plans. Additional drawings might be required following an initial application review. An applicant will often submit conceptual drawings for a major renovation to procure AC and/or Commission conceptual approval, and then submit construction drawings for final AC and/or Staff detail approval. (Refer to *Intermediate Reviews*, page 01-8.)

Additions/New Construction

All new construction, including an accessory building, structure and/or addition, must be reviewed by the AC and approved by the Commission. An application must include the following scaled and dimensioned drawings: site plan, elevations and floor plans that clearly indicate existing conditions and differentiate each proposed change. Submission requirements can also include detail drawings, context drawings and building models. (Refer to *Application Submission Requirements, Guidelines for New Construction, Additions & Demolition* page 14-3.) Often an applicant will be required to submit conceptual, design development and construction documents for a major renovation to obtain AC and/or Commission approval, and then submit construction documents for final AC and/or Staff detail approval. (Refer to *Intermediate Reviews*, page 01-8.)

Demolition

A demolition application must include a site plan that clearly shows the proposed demolition area and the stabilization details for the remaining portions of each adjoining section of a building or structure. All demolition applications will be considered by the AC and the Commission at public meetings. (Refer to *Demolition*, page 01-13.) A demolition application has a layover period of 30 days following Commission review. The VCC requires conceptual approval of redevelopment plans prior to approving a demolition application.

INTERMEDIATE REVIEWS

Multiple, intermediate reviews by the AC and/or the Commission typically are required in the case of:

- A complex application, including a major renovation, addition or new construction
- Proposed work that does not meet the *Guidelines*
- An applicant, design professional and/or contractor who is not familiar with the VCC review process

The VCC recognizes that retaining a design professional for the preparation of final construction documents is a time-consuming and potentially costly process. Intermediate review can yield a cost savings to a property owner by providing the framework for VCC approval prior to expenditures for detailed construction documents for work that may not be approvable by the VCC. The VCC encourages all applicants to contact Staff when they begin to develop plans to obtain guidance on the appropriate reviews for the proposed work.

Conceptual Review

Conceptual approval is the sanctioning, commendation or favorable regard of a general idea or the non-specific notion of some proposed work. Conceptual approval by the AC or the Commission does not automatically guarantee final approval of any subsequent submission. A conceptual approval of any project may be limited or further defined in any manner that the Commission deems appropriate, so that any addition or lack of detail may be recognized as being omitted from said approval. Conceptual approval is understood to limit a proposal in terms of its general size, scale, materials and use. Any particular details shown in a preliminary proposal need not be considered approved or denied unless specifically noted. With each conceptual approval granted by the Commission (unless specific final approval authority is granted to the AC or Staff), the final proposal (with details) shall be reviewed by the Commission before the VCC will provide permit approval for execution of the work. Therefore, the Commission may retain final approval over any project. If the Commission wishes to forfeit its final review privilege, the motion granting conceptual approval shall include a clause transferring authority for final approval to the AC or Staff.

Design Development Review

Following conceptual approval, or approval of the overall concept (known as schematic design), the next phase typically performed by a design professional is known as design development (DD). The DD documents are more detailed, overall drawings describing the proposed work, such as site plans, floor plans, elevations and building sections, as well as specific materials. The VCC reviews DD documents to ensure that the proposed work is appropriate prior to the completion of construction documents.

Construction Document Review

Construction documents (CDs) represent a complete design including a final site plan, floor plans, elevations, sections, construction details and materials necessary for a contractor to provide a bid or price for the proposed work, as well as to obtain final VCC approval and a building permit.

The 1788 Madame John's Legacy House, a National Historic Landmark, is one of the oldest documented buildings in the Vieux Carré and is typical of French colonial houses.

STAFF

In its administration of the Vieux Carré Historic District, the VCC Staff is primarily responsible for:

- Communicating with, and providing information to, a potential applicant
- Performing an initial review of application for completeness
- Directing applications to the appropriate review process
- Making recommendations to the AC and the Commission
- Processing an application for work that meets the *Guidelines* and can be approved by Staff
- Providing application materials to the AC and Commission
- Reviewing final application information for conformance with VCC requirements
- Issuing permit approval based upon the requirements of an approved application
- Verifying all ongoing and completed exterior work conforms with an issued permit
- Notifying Department of Safety and Permits in a situation of a building's or structure's imminent danger of collapse

All recommendations or decisions of the Staff may be appealed to the AC and/or the Commission.

PRECEDENT

VCC approval for a proposed project shall not be interpreted as precedent related to its appropriateness at another property. VCC review and/or approval is specific to the property and location in question.

STANDARDS FOR VCC DECISIONS

When reviewing a proposed project, the VCC is guided by principles contained in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and, more specifically, the *Standards for Rehabilitation* as issued by the National Park Service. The S*tandards for Rehabilitation* are available for reference on the VCC website at www.nola.gov/vcc.

AC REVIEW

AC meetings are open to the public and are the proper forum for public comment. The permit applications, meeting dates and application submission deadlines can be found on the VCC's website at www.nola.gov/vcc. **To clarify submission requirements and deadlines to be placed on an upcoming AC agenda, please contact the VCC** at (504) 658-1420.

The AC can make the following decisions and/or recommendations at its bi-monthly, public meetings:

Approval

If the AC determines an application completely describes the proposed work; the work is appropriate and meets the *Guidelines*; and the color rating of the property allows the AC to make a final decision, it may issue an approval with Staff to review final details.

Conceptual or DD Approval

If the AC concludes the proposed work is appropriate and meets the *Guidelines*, it may issue a recommendation for conceptual or DD approval with the details to be further reviewed and approved either by the Staff or the AC, or forwarded to the Commission for review. Projects that receive a recommendation for conceptual approval typically will be placed on an upcoming Commission meeting agenda for review. (Refer to *Intermediate Reviews*, page 01-8.)

Revision

If the AC determines that a proposed project is inappropriate, it will make a recommendation and request that the applicant return at the next meeting with revised drawings and information responsive to its request. If all AC recommendations are not followed or information is incomplete, multiple AC reviews might be required. When the AC determines the revised application meets the *Guidelines*, the application will be approved or forwarded to the Commission for review and final approval.

Denial

Should an applicant not wish to make some or all of the proposed changes recommended by the AC, or the AC denies the application, the applicant has the option to appeal to the Commission. If the applicant decides to appeal an AC recommendation, the Staff should be notified as soon as possible to place the application on the Commission's next meeting agenda. Following an AC meeting, the Staff will send the applicant a written summary of the AC findings.

The AC reviews all proposed work within the context of the property as well as its surroundings.

COMMISSION REVIEW

The Commission meets monthly and, similar to the AC, will review an application to determine whether a proposed physical alteration to property is appropriate and meets the *Guidelines*. Unlike the AC, the Commission may consider security as well as other applicant- and property-specific concerns in its deliberations. All Commission meetings are open to the public. Commission submission deadlines and meeting dates can be found on the VCC's web site at www.nola.gov/vcc.

The Commission rules on:

- VCC applications
- Appeals of Staff and/or AC decisions
- Conceptual approvals (Refer to page 01-8)
- Design development approval (Refer to page 01-8)
- **Stop Work Orders** (Refer to page 01-5)
- Retention applications (Refer to page 01-10)
- Demolition applications (Refer to page 01-13)
- **Demolition by Neglect** (Refer to page 01-10)

In addition to the review of applications, the Commission comments upon:

- Variances or changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO)
- Property subdivisions and conditional uses
- All new construction and/or capital projects completed by the City of New Orleans
- VCC policies
- Issues related to preservation of the *tout ensemble*

RETENTION APPLICATIONS

A retention application requests to retain a previously completed, or ongoing, work that did not receive a VCC permit. **A current property owner is responsible for ensuring that all exterior work completed within 10 years of written notice has received a VCC permit, even if that work was completed by a prior owner.** The VCC maintains photographs of all properties under its jurisdiction, which it uses to determine if a non-approved change was implemented recently.

The retention application process often is initiated by a **Stop Work Order** (refer to page 01-05) or through receipt of a letter notifying an owner of a violation. Once a **Stop Work Order** is issued, the application process can be time consuming and costly. A property owner who receives a **Stop Work Order** must complete and submit for review a permit application requesting retention. If additional work is required, exhibits must be submitted with the application.

A property owner applying for retention will be notified to appear before the Commission at the next scheduled meeting to explain the circumstances of the violation. At its meeting, the Commission may either approve or deny the retention application. **If the Commission denies the retention application, the property owner can be required to restore the property to the original or previous condition. Non-compliance can result in daily fines and/or a lien against the property.**

DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT

All building and property components deteriorate over time and require regular maintenance. When maintenance is not performed regularly, the condition can worsen to the point that other materials or systems are affected and the condition reaches a point of **Demolition by Neglect**. To promote the preservation of buildings and structures of the Vieux Carré, the Staff identifies deteriorated conditions that have the potential to cause long-term damage and can cite the owner of a deteriorated property with **Demolition by Neglect**. Examples of **Demolition by Neglect** include:

- An unintended opening that could potentially result in water damage – *A broken window, roof or wall opening*
- A potential hazard that could fall and cause injury or a structural element that may no longer safely carry imposed load – *A foundation, pier, wall, beam or ceiling – Staff will/may notify the Department of Safety and Permits*
- A rotting wooden element or deteriorating mortar that allows deteriorating conditions to develop further or cause other internal problems
- Any condition that allows or harbors vegetation to grow on or into an architectural element

Each property owner is required to keep their structure watertight and in good repair. If it is determined that a building or structure is in a state of **Demolition by Neglect**, the property owner will be notified that he/she has up to 30 days to contact the VCC in order to obtain permission for making the necessary repairs with required approvals and/or permits. If repair work has not begun within 30 days, the property owner may be cited by Staff for violations of the City Code and may further be notified to appear at the next public hearing of the Commission. Once the Staff or the Commission has determined that the property is in a state of **Demolition by Neglect**, the VCC can:

- Bring charges at an administrative adjudication hearing where daily fines may be levied against the property owner
- Carry out the necessary repairs and place a lien on the property for value of the fines and the costs associated with making the required repairs

VCC COMMISSION DENIAL

Following VCC Commission denial, an applicant may:

- Choose not to proceed with any action
- Submit a substantially revised application to the VCC
- Appeal to City Council within 30 days of issuance of the Commission's decision
- Resubmit the denied application for VCC review and approval after a one year waiting period

A well constructed, regularly maintained building can remain usable for hundreds of years. The 1752 Ursuline Convent, a National Historic Landmark, is a French colonial building and the oldest documented structure in the Vieux Carré.

SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION

Historic buildings are intrinsically "green," as reusing an existing building has substantially lower environmental impact than building a new one. Preservation and rehabilitation minimize the wasteful loss of materials while maintaining a distinctive sense of place. Sustainable benefits of preservation include:

- The historic building or structure already exists, and the energy required to fabricate the lumber, bricks, windows and doors was expended long ago
- New construction often includes demolition of an existing building (construction waste comprises approximately 25% to 30% of landfills), in addition to the fabrication of new construction materials creating additional waste, while the preservation of an existing building conserves landfill space
- The most appropriate materials for the majority of preservation projects are often historic materials rather than non-biodegradable manufactured products, such as vinyl and/or plastics

COST VS. VALUE-ADDED

While some of the recommendations in these *Guidelines* do not represent the least expensive options, the VCC strongly believes that selecting a better quality option will be less costly in the long-term.

An immediate benefit is that using traditional materials and construction methods tends to be more historically appropriate and sustainable. Another benefit is that traditional materials generally have a longer life-cycle because they are appropriate for the local climate, requiring less frequent replacement. Additionally, traditional materials tend to reduce associated landfill waste and replacement costs, as well as potentially increasing a property's value associated with authentic, higher quality construction.

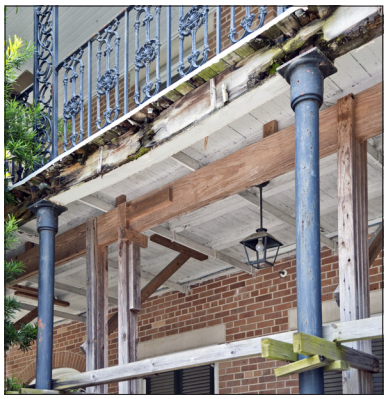
MAINTENANCE IS PRESERVATION

Regular maintenance helps preserve a building or property, protect the real estate value and investment, and keep the Vieux Carré an attractive place to live, work and visit. Lack of regular upkeep may result in accelerated deterioration of a building element and/or features. In the case of a historic building, these features often represent character defining elements that may be difficult and costly to replace. Long-term lack of maintenance can impact a building's structure, resulting in the need for more expensive repairs.

It is prudent to regularly inspect a property to identify potential problems. If a problem is detected early, minor maintenance may not only improve a property's overall appearance and value, but also may prevent or postpone the need for extensive and costly future repairs. Regular maintenance items typically include roof repair, cleaning gutters and downspouts, and painting exterior woodwork. (Refer to the *Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance* and the *Guidelines for Exterior Painting* for additional information.)

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Prolonging the life of original materials on the exterior of a historic structure through regular maintenance
- Avoiding replacement of original material with newer, non-traditional material



Lack of regular maintenance can make some conditions hazardous. Care should be taken to ensure any portion of a building that supports people, or that projects over a public right-of-way, such as a balcony or gallery, is well secured and maintained.

REPAIRS & REPLACEMENT

When maintenance of a historic feature is insufficient to preserve it, repair or replacement in-kind may be necessary. If repair of existing fabric/materials is not possible, the VCC encourages replacement to match existing. Similar to a regular maintenance program, small replacement activities can prevent or postpone an extensive and costly future replacement project.

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Repairing in a manner that is appropriate to stabilize and protect the building's important materials and features
- Replacing in-kind to the greatest extent possible – when repair is not possible – reproducing the original feature exactly, matching the material, size, scale, detailing, profile, texture and finish utilizing similar techniques
- Using compatible materials and techniques – when replacement in-kind is not possible – to convey an appearance similar to the original feature in design, color, texture, finish and visual quality to the historic elements

A major renovation projects typically requires use of multiple Guidelines *sections.*

ALTERATIONS & RENOVATIONS

An alteration or renovation sometimes is needed to ensure the continued use of a building. Nonetheless, consideration must be taken to reduce the potential of negatively impacting the character of the historic property. A relatively minor alteration can include installing a new sign or a replacement window or door within an existing opening. A major alteration or renovation generally involves a more substantial change to the exterior of a building or structure, and might require modification of the existing historic fabric. When considering an alteration or renovation, every effort must be taken to preserve the historic building features and context.

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Identifying, retaining and preserving the character defining features of a historic building
- Minimizing alteration of the historically significant design, elements, materials and features
- Using design elements, materials and techniques that are compatible with the historic building and setting
- Maintaining the appropriate historic context of the building and site features

This former fire station has been converted into a residence. The signage and central truck door refer to the building's former use.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

In an adaptive reuse project, it may be necessary to use a building for a different purpose than it is used currently or for which it was originally designed. This may require a more substantial alteration or renovation, particularly at the interior. (All changes in use are subject to review under the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.) Similar to an alteration or renovation, great care must be given to maintain the character of the original building.

Examples of Adaptive Reuse in the Vieux Carré:

- Conversion of a house to multiple residences or offices
- Conversion of an industrial or commercial building into housing or an institutional use such as a school or church
- Conversion of an institutional building into residential use

Benefits of Adaptive Reuse:

- Retains historic character and high-quality historic materials and craftsmanship
- Promotes stability of ownership and occupancy and use of historic property
- Retains established neighborhood presence, existing infrastructure and streetscape

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Identifying, retaining and preserving the character defining features of the historic building
- Selecting a compatible new use that does not require substantial removal or modification of historic building fabric, particularly at window and door openings

NEW CONSTRUCTION & ADDITIONS

New construction and additions can dramatically alter the appearance of an individual property, the surrounding landscape and the Vieux Carré. The VCC requires design that is compatible with the location on a property (siting), and its form and materials within the context of the specific location. Because of the historic integrity of the Vieux Carré, a property owner should take great care when proposing either new construction or an addition. All applications for new construction and/or an addition are subject to AC and Commission review.

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Preserving the cohesive ambiance of a historic resource with compatible, sympathetic construction
- Designing a new building or addition to be compatible with the siting, proportion, scale, form, materials, openings, roof configuration, details and finishes of existing buildings on the property and along the streetscape
- Constructing an addition at secondary elevation wherever possible, with a design subordinate to the historic building and compatible within the context of the existing property and block (Refer to *Compatible Design Principles*, *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions & Demolition,* page 14-4)
- Constructing an addition in a manner that does not radically change, obscure, damage or destroy historic building fabric
- Following the *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions & Demolition*

These traditional townhouses were constructed in 1957 in the Greek Revival style with ground floor retail. The form, scale, massing, details and materials are compatible with surrounding buildings.

Although the façade of this c. 1800 building was recently repaired, the building's structure did not receive required maintenance. This resulted in a collapse, pedestrian hazard and the ultimate loss of the entire building.

DEMOLITION

The demolition of all or a portion of a historic building or site feature within the Vieux Carré is considered a drastic action because it may alter the character of the area and surrounding streetscape. Once a historic resource or building that contributes to the heritage of the community is destroyed, it is impossible to reproduce it. In addition, the richness of the design, texture, materials and details, as well as the unique character and interest those qualities add to the neighborhood, are lost. Similarly, if a building is relocated from its historic context, the character of the surrounding area is forever changed.

The demolition of a historically or architecturally significant building, structure or feature within the Vieux Carré is rarely considered an appropriate option.

THE VCC REQUIRES:

- Evaluating the significance of the historic building and/or site feature
- Exhausting all attempts to reuse a historic building or site feature prior to considering relocation or demolition including:
  - □ Stabilizing, weatherproofing and securing
  - □ Renovating or adaptively reusing the building, structure or feature in a way that does not substantially alter its historic character
  - □ Selling or transferring the property
- Submitting redevelopment plans concurrently with demolition plans and obtaining conceptual approval for the proposed redevelopment work
- Following requirements in *Demolition, Guidelines for New Construction, Additions & Demolition,* page 14-20

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following organizations may provide useful information. Contact information is available on the VCC website at www.nola.gov/vcc and at the VCC Office.

Local

The Vieux Carré Commission

- Vieux Carré Historic District regulatory body

Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library

- Research materials on New Orleans and Louisiana
- City archives

Notarial Archives and Conveyance Office, Orleans Parish

- Deeds, documents and images

Tulane University Southeastern Architectural Archive

- Architectural drawings archive; Sanborn maps

Williams Research Center of the Historic New Orleans Collection

- Photographic archives, documents, publications
- Vieux Carré Survey

Mayor's Office of Economic Development

- Five-year tax abatement program

Preservation Resource Center

- Neighborhood preservation programs and assistance

State

Louisiana Office of Cultural Development – Division of Historic Preservation

- National Register, National Historic Landmark programs
- Federal and state tax credits
- Louisiana archeological resources
- Main Street Program

National

National Park Service

- Heritage Preservation Services
- Historic Landscape Initiative
- Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

National Center for Preservation Technology & Training

- Technical Resources

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Library of Congress

- Historic American Buildings Survey
- Historic American Engineering Record

Preservation Trades Network

- Education, networking and outreach for preservation and traditional building trades

U.S. Green Building Council

The Association for Preservation Technology International

The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation

PRESERVATION RESOURCES

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Where should I begin the application process?

A: It is helpful to begin by understanding what makes a property historically or architecturally significant (see below). Contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 for a property's color rating. Obtain the *Guidelines* section(s) applicable to the proposed project and consider whether the designed changes are appropriate for the property. (Refer to *Design Guidelines*, page 01-4 for additional information.)

Q: How can I find out about the history of the Vieux Carré or a property?

A: Information about an individual property is available from the VCC office. The Williams Research Center of the Historic New Orleans Collection is also a good resource for historic images as well as archival documents. Additional information regarding the Vieux Carré National Historic Landmark District is available at the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development – Division of Historic Preservation. There are numerous reference books and resources, some of which are listed on page 01-14.

Q: How do I make sure the VCC will approve my project?

A: It is helpful to have an understanding of what makes a property architecturally or culturally significant before considering a project. This will allow an owner to make informed decisions about the proposed project with an understanding of some of the issues that will be considered by the VCC. Each section of the *Guidelines* outlines what will and will not be approved by the Commission.

Q: Is the review process expensive?

A: The VCC does not charge a fee for a permit, however, other City departments assess fees based on the nature and scope of the work proposed.

Q: Do I need to hire a design professional?

A: Carefully reviewing the applicable *Guidelines* and the application package for the permit is recommended prior to hiring a design professional or contractor. If not required by another City department to receive a construction permit, an applicant is welcome to submit an application for work without the assistance of a design professional. However, for a complex proposal or one that requires the submission of scaled drawings, consultation with a professional will often speed up the review process. When retaining the services of a professional, it is helpful to work with an architect, contractor, etc., who is familiar with the requirements of the VCC. Before submitting an application, including all necessary materials, confirm that it is complete.

Q: I am planning a complex project. When is the best time to talk to the VCC?

A: For a complex project, or a project that requires multiple reviews, the best time to talk to the VCC is as early in the project as possible, before investing a lot of time and money into the design process. An initial, informal informational review with Staff can help move a project more quickly through the review process saving an applicant both time and money. Contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 for an appointment.

Q: Is there a way to expedite the review process?

A: It is important to thoroughly complete the application and submit all required materials to the VCC for review. Contact the VCC directly to understand the submission materials required for a project; whether AC and/or full Commission review is required; and the specific submission deadlines and meeting dates.

Q: Does my project require VCC review?

A: Any proposed exterior change to a building, site, monument or structure within the boundaries of the local Vieux Carré Historic District is required to receive VCC permit approval. Additionally, all work that might be considered ordinary maintenance and repair including repainting, requires VCC review. Most applications for maintenance and repair are reviewed at the Staff level and are completed within 7 business days.

Q: How do I apply for VCC review?

A: The specific submission requirements for VCC review will vary based upon the complexity of the proposed project and a building's rating, but the submission materials are similar to those required for a building permit review with the addition of some specific information such as paint colors.

For information regarding submission requirements for a proposed project, refer to the information available on the VCC website at www.nola.gov/vcc, the One Stop Shop website at www.nola.gov/onestop, and/or the One Stop Shop office on the 7th floor of City Hall at 1300 Perdido Street. After submitting an application through the One Stop Shop, an applicant should provide all required material and/or color samples to the VCC office.

Q: Can a VCC decision be appealed?

A: All Staff and AC decisions may be appealed to the full Commission within 30 days of the issuance of written notice. Contact the VCC to be placed on the Commission agenda. A Commission decision may be appealed to City Council within 30 days of the issuance of written notice of the Commission's decision. (Refer to *VCC Commission Denial*, page 01-10.)

Q: Can I begin construction immediately after I get the VCC's approval?

A: VCC approval is not necessarily sufficient to obtain a building permit. Each project is subject to review by all City agencies having jurisdiction over compliance with zoning, building and/or safety codes. VCC review is just one step in obtaining a building permit. **An applicant must complete all necessary reviews and obtain all necessary permits applicable to the project prior to proceeding with any work. A property owner cannot receive a building permit without first obtaining prior approval from the VCC.**

Q: What if my project changes after obtaining a permit?

A: All ongoing and completed work is reviewed by the VCC for compliance with an issued permit. Contact the VCC at (504) 658-1420 prior to beginning any non-approved work to determine review requirements for the proposed modification. Minor modifications at an ongoing project can often be approved by Staff in advance of completing work.

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	Jared C. Brossett – *District "D"*
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